

Once again I have been fortunate enough to watch the bushland spring into various shades of colour over the last few months, and the yellow of various Hibbertias being very prominent. The area concerned stretches from Perth along the Coastal Plains, through the foothills, into the Darling Range to Muja some 215 km south of Perth. With good average rainfall it is interesting to note the difference in growth and flowering compared to last year, which I mentioned in a previous newsletter. The following comments on some of the Hibbertias seen, hopefully will prove of interest, even though they may have been mentioned previously.

H. AMPLEXICAULIS - This plant generally grows in heavier soils like Chocolate loam, in the Forest area, in gravel and sometimes to the edge of damp areas. Though somewhat straggly and sprawling and variant in growth it attains approximately 60cm in height, it is quite attractive with its large ovate oblong elliptical stem clasping leaves and flowers though not abundant at any one time are 40mm in diameter. In a cleared area I notice large numbers of small plants, upon investigating it was found they were coming from old root stems, it would appear this could be quite hardy plant. I have had one for two years growing in sand and growth and flowering has proved to be quite good, the plant receives morning sun and some summer watering. This particular species is one of several W.A. Hibbertias which has been grown successfully in Europe.

H. HEUGELII - Normally grows in sand on the Coastal Plains also in gravel in the hills near Perth. There are two forms one with terete leaves up to 5cm long a small straggly plant 30cm high by 45cm across. The second form is more attractive with narrow linear leaves of the same length with fine hairs on leaves and carpels, generally more compact with large numbers of flowers 40mm in diameter being 20cm high by 30cm in diameter. I have seen this plant in large numbers in both cleared areas and Banksia woodlands providing quite a colourful spectacle.

H. HYPERICOIDES - Undoubtedly the most widespread of the Western Hibbertias, has been flowering since May and possibly at its peak during August and September will continue to flower through November at least. It grows in virtually all soils and situations and must be one of our hardiest plants. The amazing part to me is even though it is so widespread and such a prolific flowering plant I have never found seeds and very rarely one finds any seedlings. H. Hypericoides can be propagated by cutting though I find it can be several months before roots form, so patience is required, the best cutting material is new shoots after a fire. I myself prefer taking cuttings from June to October using a coarse white sand and black bush sand 50/50 and have had up to 45% success with cutting, though at the other end of the scale total failure.

H. SUB-VAGINATA - Mainly grows in sand along the coastal plains and sandy areas through the Darling Range. Normally a compact plant 30cm high by 60cm in diameter with flowers 20cm in diameter, being partially hidden at the junction of Linear Truncate, leaves up to 40mm long, foliage varies from a green to a blue/green. Sub-Vaginata grows quite well in an open situation as well as a semi-shaded situation. I recently found numerous plants on a farm property which has been cleared and receives superphosphate yearly, plants being 50cm high and 1.2metres in diameter, I have also found H. Hypericoides in similar situations, so possibly this fertiliser could be worth trying with other Hibbertias. Though seed is very difficult to locate I have found in cleared and burnt areas large numbers of seedlings and small plants - examples are 50 or more seedlings within an 8cm diameter, away from the nearest plants so possibly carried there by ants. H. Sub-Vaginata appears quite hardy in a garden and will flower from May to October. Propagation can be carried out successfully with cuttings though to date I have not kept records on this plant.

H. VAGINATA - This particular Hibbertia is quite attractive even when not in flower, the arrangement of floral leaves gives one the impression that it is ready to burst into flower at any time. Another feature is the colouring of the leaves which can turn to a Brown like colour. In an area 65km south of Perth on the Coastal plains I recently noticed what appeared to be large numbers of plants dying, a closer examination showed the plants flowering quite prolifically and the colour of the leaves ranged from Green, light brown to a redish brown. The Soil, being of semi-peat nature and quite moist. The interesting part to me was if the soil was the reason why should not all plants be of the same colour. H. Vaginata grows in sand on coastal plains and sandy areas in the Darling Ranges and in open situations is quite compact, flowering period appears to be midwinter through spring. Seeds are about 1mm in diameter and a few generally can be found under plants, to those members who I have sent seeds, I have found that Heat Treatment or scarifying seeds is needed, I have tried sowing direct and burning grass and leaves over the area with quite good results. Unfortunately this particular Hibbertia never seems to last for more than two or three years which is a pity because it presents quite a colourfull picture when in full bloom.

H. STELLARIS - This Hibbertia showed the biggest difference in that buds and even a few flowers were showing during May, even though the foliage still had the dry summer appearance. During late winter and early spring the areas where H. Stellaris were seen provided a magnificent sight. The amount of seedlings produced each year was countless, so possibly in its native Habitat plants would not survive more than five or six years. Normally I would think a good size plant would be 60cm in diameter, but I have seen numerous plants around 1.2m in diameter.

Another feature I found interesting was that quite often three or four species of *Hibbertia* were growing close together, within arms reach more or less, sometimes two species even appeared to come from the one stem. This appears uncommon among other species of our native flora and would be interested to hear members comments of this point. Areas concerned involved coastal plains and the Darling Ranges, soil variations from sand, gravel, to damp gullies. Examples such as in a Damp situation where *H. Stellaris*, *H. Montana*, *H. Ampleicalis* and *H. Rhadinopoda* could be seen, in sand *H. Hypericoides*, *H. Sub-Vaginata*, *H. Vaginata*, *H. Racemosa*, *H. Huegelli*, and a *H. Species* which I have not yet identified appeared in varying combinations of three or four.

In my last newsletter I mentioned the difficulty of striking *H. Sericea*, Mr Ross MacDonald, has had great success with *H. Sericea* and am sure he won't mind letting members know his method. Mix is 80% coarse sand, 10% soil, 10% peat moss using Seridix No. 3 placed in a Polyhouse and they are ready for potting on in about eight weeks. Ross also goes on to say plants if planted in shade need very little attention whilst in the open watering is required during the warmer months of the year. No fertiliser was used but mulching with sand and gravel is beneficial.

Once again I will ask any information that you may have on growing *Hibbertias* please forward. The pressed cutting enclosed in this newsletter is from *H. Hypericoides*.

Bernie Bixon.